

Things Secret and Things Revealed

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[0:00] Well, our study is Spectacular Sins and Their Global Purpose in the Glory of Christ. Spectacular Sins! And next week we are going to get to the first of those spectacular sins in the fall of Satan.

But this week, well last week, we brought out these four disrupting questions, four questions that make us really think and they were, why does God tell us that he's sovereign over sin? Now again, we didn't give any answers, but we just put the questions out there.

Why does God tell us he's sovereign over sin? Second question was, why doesn't he restrain sin more often? He can and he does restrain sin. Why doesn't he do it more often? How can we have faith and joy during the severity of the last days?

And then fourthly, how is Christ glorified in a world of sin? And that really is probably the most important question, because we are called, as individuals, as a body, as all Christians are, to live for the glory of Christ.

So whether by life or by death, that Jesus Christ would be magnified. And then the question is, well how do we do that in this kind of world, world where sin and spectacular sins are so rampant?

[1:30] Well, we didn't give you any answers. We merely asked the questions, and they are good questions to ask because they put us to work. We talked about how our immune system needs something to fight against to grow.

We talked about how weightlifting, the whole idea is to lift heavier and heavier weights, to disrupt, to in some ways make the muscles struggle in order to encourage them to grow.

Well, that's what these questions do. Well, God has not answered necessarily all the questions, all of our questions about sin and the misery that are in the world.

Does anyone know what Deuteronomy 29.29 says? It has to do with this. That's right.

So it has two parts. The secret things belong to the Lord our God. There are secret things. And secret things are opposed to things that are revealed, things for us to obey.

[2:32] Well, the secret things belong to the Lord our God. There are certain secret things. And among them are a lot of these questions that we put to you, that I put to you last week.

Now, secret things, things that we don't have the answers for, in a certain sense, they don't shake my faith.

Actually, they encourage my faith. A lot of times people take the secret things and then that causes them to not believe. It causes them to wrestle with their faith.

But in a certain sense, these things don't make me struggle in my faith. They actually strengthen my faith. Because secret things, unknowable things, real paradoxes, where it seems like these things are contrary or contradictory, how can they both be true?

And yet they are true. Those paradoxes, they don't have to shake our faith. And it works out like this. If I could understand everything about God, if I could understand everything that he is doing and there were no questions, then I would know that my faith was not in a real God.

[3:44] If God exists, then he's going to be bigger than me. He's going to know more than I do.

He's going to do things that don't make any sense to me, that don't register on my scale of comprehension. He's going to know and do things that are beyond me.

And so we sing that song. Our God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. If God has no mysterious ways, no ways that are hidden from us and secret from us and make us scratch our heads, then he would be just like me, wouldn't he?

He would be on my level. He'd be no bigger than me. He wouldn't be anyone I could trust. He wouldn't be anyone that I could worship. He would be on my level. Like our memory verse says, he

wouldn't be.

If I understood everything about him, he wouldn't be exalted over the nations and his glory above the heavens. He would fit inside my box and then I would be God and he would not be.

[4:55] So in some senses, secret things are good. And I'm glad for them because they tell me that my faith is not something of my own creating.

It's not from a human origin. It tells me that my faith is from God. The things I must believe must be divinely revealed because no one in their right mind would come up with these things, would put these things together.

So for now, we see through a mirror dimly. We know in part. We know in part. And I imagine a lot of things that we question and wonder will be cleared up when we see the whole picture.

I think one time I compared it to a tapestry. And God is the master weaver. And he's weaving a beautiful tapestry.

But the problem is he's on the top side and we are underneath. And from the underside, a tapestry looks like it.

[6:00] It doesn't look like very much of anything. There's lots of knots and tangles. And maybe you can start to see something of the picture. But the colors are blurred. They're muted. They're dimmed. And we're not sure how it all goes together.

But when God cuts the last strand and takes the tapestry off the loom and shows it to us, everything will be made clear. Or at least a lot more will be made clear.

So there are things secret and there are things revealed. One of the clear things that the Bible teaches and that we need to know in this whole matter of all these questions is that Christ is sovereign over all hostile powers.

And that's what we're going to talk about today. He is sovereign over all hostile powers. That's the point of today's lesson. Some things are mysterious. But one of those things is this, that Jesus Christ is sovereign.

He rules over. He is the king of all hostile powers. And Paul makes that point very clear in Colossians 1. And so I'm going to ask you to turn there. Colossians chapter 1.

[7:16] And if you've been here on Sunday evening, a lot of this is going to be reviewed today. And if you haven't been there, then this is some fabulous stuff from Colossians chapter 1.

Paul writes so magnificently of Jesus Christ in this chapter. Colossians chapter 1. And we're going to begin looking at verses 9 through 12.

So Colossians 1. And remember the point is, Christ is sovereign over all hostile powers. So verse 9, chapter 1. For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience and joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

So, what is Paul praying for in this passage? He's praying that they would grow in their knowledge of God through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

[8:45] He wants them to grow in their knowledge of God and how are they going to grow through their knowledge of God? By coming to understand and have spiritual wisdom.

For what purpose? Why? Well, so that they could live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way, bearing fruit, growing in the knowledge of God.

That means growing in closeness and relational closeness to God that they may be strong in his power and that they might joyfully endure bearing fruit all the way to then. Now, that is, those are some of the very things that we are talking about in the study.

Remember, we're asking, well, how can we joyfully endure and keep loving when things are really bad? In the severity of the last days, how can we do that?

Well, Paul's praying that we might be able to do those very exact things. So, last week we talked about that. And that's what Paul prays for.

[9:46] That's what he wants for them. Now, in verse 13, he begins a litany, a list, of foundational truths about Jesus Christ. And I don't want you to miss the connection between what goes, what

went before the prayer and what comes after.

So, they go together. As Paul prays for these things, he's going to give them the truth that will help them to endure. The truth that will help them bear fruit.

The truth that will make them strong. The truth that will bring them closer to God. And he's going to tell them how they do that. And it's all through Jesus Christ. So, so how do we persevere?

How do we grow in the wisdom and knowledge of God? It's as we understand and as we live in all of these amazing truths about Jesus Christ. So, do you want to be wise?

Where is wisdom stored at? It's in Jesus Christ. Do you want to be fruitful? He's the fruitful vine. Do you want to grow and persevere? Then you need to know these things.

[10:56] And we begin in verse 13 with, you are living in Christ's kingdom. You're living in Christ's kingdom. In him, you have redemption.

The forgiveness of your sins. Those things are not irrelevant past events that have nothing to do with your present fruitfulness and your present perseverance.

As you dwell in them and think about them and live in the goodness of that, you bear fruit. That Christ is the image of the invisible God. How do you come to know God better?

It's as you come and you see Jesus Christ and you live in that. That Christ is the firstborn over all creation. That by him all things were created whether in heaven or on earth.

Visible and invisible whether thrones or powers or authorities. All things were created by him and for him. He's before all things and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church.

[11:54] He's the firstborn. He's the beginning and firstborn from among the dead so that in everything he might have the supremacy. So he has the supremacy in the first creation and he has the supremacy in the beginning in the second creation.

The fullness of God dwells in him. Through him God reconciled all things to himself through the cross and he made peace through his blood shed on the cross. So how do you stay faithful and fruitful and loving bearing the fruit of the spirit in the face of spectacular sin?

Well you live in this. You live in the glory and the majesty of Jesus Christ. So your joy your fruitfulness your wisdom your knowledge of God corresponds to the measure that you're captured by Jesus Christ.

Now let's go back to verse 16 and we're going to look at these at two prepositions.

Verse 16 For by him all things were created and all things were created by him and for him.

[13:05] So everything that exists he created and all that exists is for him.

It's to serve him and his purposes. So nothing nothing nothing nothing at all in all of the universe exists for its own sake.

Everything exists to serve Christ to make Christ more fully known. That includes you. the reason you exist at all it's because of him.

It's because of him it's by him and it's for him. Your life isn't pointed in on yourself it's to be pointed to Jesus Christ.

So it includes you and it includes that person that you have the hardest time liking. They exist for Jesus Christ. So the smallest particle the biggest star cockroaches beauty queens and everything in between Hitler Saint Augustine all by him and for him.

[14:22] But notice in verse 16 he points out specifically some things in particular what are they that exist by him and for him?

What does it say? Yeah, rulers, powers, authorities. He points to these three entities, these powers, rulers, and authorities.

Now, Paul could have talked about millions of things, right? We just talked about anything from cockroaches to beauty queens, Hitler, Saint Augustine, everyone. Everything is this. He could have pointed to millions of things and yet he chose to put his finger on these three things, powers, rulers, and authorities.

Now, what are they? Well, they're Christ's enemies. They're his enemies. There's those who oppose him. Look over at chapter 2 and verse 15.

This is in the passage about what he did and how he saved us and how we have full forgiveness and it says, and having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

[15:31] Now, if you were back in the Roman days, you would know what a public spectacle was for. So, Caesar comes and he invades your territory and he wins and he conquers you and then, you know what he does?

He drags your best people away, he drags your kings away, he drags prisoners away, and then he takes you down to Rome and he parades you for everyone to see, making a mockery of you. So, there was a battle and one person was the victor and then there was humiliation to follow. That's what Paul is talking about. Christ was in conflict with these powers, rulers, and authorities and at the cross he disarmed them, he stripped them bare and now he makes them into a public spectacle.

The powers and authorities are his enemies and they are our enemies as believers. brothers. In Ephesians 6, incidentally, Ephesians and Colossians are sort of like brothers.

If you've never noticed this, a great exercise to do is to read Ephesians and then read Colossians and then go back to Ephesians, maybe read one chapter in each, and what you're going to find is they're different, but they talk a lot about the same things just in little different ways.

[16:50] Well, in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12, Paul says, for our struggle, Pastor John quoted this at the meeting yesterday, for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Now, that tells us who these rulers, powers, and authorities are. They're not human kings. They're not human powers.

They're not earthly governors. They're not bad leaders on earth. They are demons. They are fallen angels. Powers of this dark world.

Spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. And the point I want to make here right now is they do exercise real power.

When Paul says they have power, he's not speaking metaphorically or something else. he's saying they have real power. They're not powerful in name only.

[17:59] They have real influence and they really exercise it. They're hidden from our eyes. And yet they're there. And Paul teaches us to think of when we're having spiritual conflict that it's not just against flesh and blood.

Even my own flesh and blood alone. It's against these powers of the dark world. in Revelation 2, Jesus says to the church in Smyrna, do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer.

I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for 10 days. Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Who's going to put them into prison? the devil. Who's going to kill them? The devil. He'll use his minions, he'll use his human stooges, but Jesus puts his finger on the real power, the hand in the glove, if you will.

And that's the power of these thrones and powers and authorities. So we have to understand as we begin to look at the particular sins as we go forward, that there is a dark hand guiding all of them.

[19:26] And as we go forward into the future, and what I'm talking about is as we go into the next 10, 20, 50, 100, thousand years, we have to realize that our struggle is not with flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

So the question is, where do these powers come from, and why do they exist? Well, Colossians 1, 16, doesn't give us the whole answer, but it gives us the answer that we need to know.

Okay? It doesn't give us all the answers, but it does give us the answer that we need to know. They come from Christ. for by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or authorities, all things were created by him.

That's where they come from. Their origin, at least as creatures, is from Christ. He is their creator. He is their creator.

And that clarifies something that we need to understand and something that we need to believe that Satan is not the opposite of God.

[20:45] And what I mean by that, Satan is not the yin to God's yang. He's not the dark side and God is the light side. They're not equally opposed. They're not equal poles pulling at each other.

Satan is closer to a worm than he is to God. And I don't say that in a mocking way. I say that in a real way. He is a creature.

God is the creator. And so this again goes back to our memory verse. Satan is on the chart. He's with all of us in this category.

And yet Jesus Christ is over here. He's on the creator side. So in real terms, Satan, the dictator of the devils, is not the opposite of God.

God, I mean he opposes him and you understand what I'm saying. But he's the sort of the polar opposite, equal in strength, so to speak, to Michael, the archangel.

[21:48] Revelation 12 says this, there was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough and they lost their place in heaven.

so Michael, the archangel in heaven, and Satan are really binary opposites. But Satan belongs to Christ, whether he wishes it or not.

And nothing can change the fact that he owes his existence not to himself, but to Jesus Christ, his creator. He owes his existence to the Son of God who made him.

Now, Christ didn't create him evil, and we're going to talk about this next week. In fact, Jude talks about angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home, they abandoned their proper place, so they were created good but they rebelled against God.

And so Paul tells us that these satanic powers that direct the course of this evil world, he's called the God of this world in some places, they were made by Christ.

[22:59] Creature, creator. Christ is sovereign over all hostile powers. But he also says they were made for him, they exist for him.

They existed to make his glories known before they ever fell, and now that they have fallen, they exist to glorify Jesus Christ. They'll do it in a different way, but they will still display his strength and beauty.

Christ will not be thwarted. And so all their rage cannot alter for one second that everything they do and everything that they are will eventually redound to the glory of Jesus Christ.

Does that make sense? They exist by him and they exist for him and they will serve his purpose. So we don't know everything, but we do know everything we need to know to live, to breathe, to not be anxious, to not be afraid, but to rejoice in the Lord no matter what happens.

Okay? So how should this shape what goes on in our world and when we see spectacular sin and people going from bad to worse?

[24:09] Well, at the same time that we're grieving and we're sad about those things, we don't need to be anxious about them because Jesus Christ is sovereign over all hostile powers.

And if he is over the dark hands that guide the earthly powers, then he surely can take care of the earthly powers. Now, what is the point of all this?

It's just this. We need to understand his sovereignty over the hostile powers and it serves a very practical purpose. A very practical purpose.

This is not just like, oh, this is interesting inside information about things that we don't normally talk about, normally think about. We need it. Does anyone know what 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17 says about Scripture?

You should know. God-breathed and useful or profitable. It's useful. It's not just interesting to know, it is useful.

[25:15] What are some things that are useful to you, ladies, in the kitchen? Well, you have a blender. And what is your interest in it? Not that you know all the functions, but you want to know it so that you can use it.

And men, you have things in your life. Maybe it's that blender. I don't know. I'm just saying. All theology is for life.

It's useful to us. So, let's actually turn there to 2 Timothy. And we're going to, we just want to show you how, or I just want to show you how weighty, big, doctrinal truths serve a very practical, useful purpose.

And we're going to take it in the life of Timothy. So, Paul is writing to Timothy. I don't need to give you all the background, but just to say, Paul is on his way out, and Timothy is about to go forward, and his mentor is about to leave the scene.

Now, what kind of man was Timothy? At least, what are some of the ideas that are generally attached to this man Timothy? Roger. He's timid.

[26:37] Or at least, we don't know how timid he was, but at least it was something in his personality that Paul had to write and say, now, people, make sure that when Timothy comes that you receive him.

Timothy wasn't a guy that could just walk into a place and dominate it and everyone would be like, oh, here's Timothy, he's so fabulous, and they'd all listen to him. He was more of probably a reserved kind of guy.

He wasn't going to just put himself up there. there. We know that he was young. I don't know how old he was when 2 Timothy was written, but when Paul brought him along, he was a young man. Again, so he's not going to be big, bold, brash, mature, he's seen everything, he's done everything, I can go into a situation that I've never been in and just handle it.

He was young, maybe a little timid, maybe a bit given to anxiety. Paul talks about his tummy had problems sometimes, and we don't know what that is, but he might not have wanted to put himself out there all the time.

[27:43] Now, that goes to show you that God chooses all different kinds of personalities. He doesn't attach his purposes and his calling to just one particular kind of personality, but you can see that that timidity and that shyness, it could really threaten the effectiveness of his ministry.

Not that it wasn't something that he could overcome, or that by God's grace he couldn't overcome, but if it wasn't dealt with, he would be a less effective minister because he would be worrying about what people thought and not getting out there like he needed to.

Well, that's just to say Timothy was called, but like all of your pastors, whoever they have been, they're works in progress. They themselves are works in progress.

And so how is Timothy going to grow? How is he going to overcome his timidity and become courageous? Well, look at chapter 1, 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 8.

So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me, his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

[29:00] Suffering the suffering of the gospel by the power of God. So that's the command. It's good. It's necessary. He's, Paul's saying, don't be ashamed. Be courageous.

But, like all of us, we need more than just go out there and do it. that doesn't help someone who's afraid. The command doesn't give you courage or faith in order to go out and do it.

It's good, but Paul gives more. And you see, who has saved us? So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me, his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God who has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace.

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Now, that is big, weighty, gospel truth. It's good news, but it's good news shaped in meeting the exact place where Timothy is weakest.

[30:26] Do you see that? Timothy is afraid of suffering, but Paul says don't be afraid to suffer. No, he says Jesus who has destroyed death and brought immortality to light through the gospel.

So Timothy sometimes wonders if all this shame will be worth it. That's normal, isn't it? Is it going to be worth it for me to be ashamed? Well, what does Paul do?

He says, brother, look at the grace of God. Look at the grace of God. God was thinking of you from all of eternity.

He gave you grace in Christ Jesus from the beginning of time. He set his love and he had plans to rescue you from the beginning of time. time. So that's this great glorious gospel, but it spans all of history.

It begins at the beginning of time, but where does it end? Immortality to the end of time. Now, why does Paul say this?

[31:32] Why does he say, look at the grace of God? It began before time even began and it went all the way to the very end. It's going to go all the way to the very end. why does Paul say it?

To help Timothy with a common problem, timidity. Timothy is timid and Paul's antidote is this big encouragement and he gives that big encouragement through weighty doctrine.

That's a picture of why we need to know about why Christ is sovereign over all hostile powers.

Because if we're going to live an ordinary Christian life where we overcome ordinary problems like

being afraid, being discouraged, saying, is this ever going to end?

And then shrinking down into ourselves and being shriveled in ourselves. How are we going to overcome that? We need this truth that Christ is sovereign and he's not just sovereign over earthly powers.

He's sovereign over the highest and the most evil powers. now, Christ is sovereign over all hostile powers.

[32 : 48] Let me ask you, what does that do for us? What kind of fruit does that bear in our lives when we think about it? Peace.

It gives us peace. Very good. Peace. You want peace in the face of spectacular sin? You need to think about these things.

What else? Hope. Hope. Very good. What else? Courage. All right, Dare's answering all the questions.

Courage. Faith. Christian life runs on faith. Well, how are you going to have faith in the face of terrible sin?

You need to have equally big truth to hold on to and to believe. What else? Courage.

[33 : 47] Perseverance. Joy. All the fruit of the Spirit. that's what these things work in us when we hold them before our eyes and when we believe them.

Now, we're going to end. I'm just going to give you five reasons why it's important for us to know this fact that Christ is sovereign over all hostile powers.

Five reasons that we need to bring this in and let it do its work. First, it's objectively true. It's true. It's as true as the pew you are sitting on.

Right now, Christ is on the throne and he is sovereign over all evil powers. It's as true as the mattress that you're going to go home and sleep on. And truth matters.

People perish for not knowing the truth. People perish for lack of vision, for lack of understanding what God wills for them. Second, Thessalonians says people are perishing because they refuse to love the truth and to be saved.

[34 : 58] Knowing the truth and salvation go hand in hand. Second, God wants us to know that Christ alone is to be worshipped and revered. Worshipped and revered.

Now, do we disrespect these hostile powers? Jude says that we should respect them.

That doesn't mean worship them. What he's saying is you give them their due. Jude's talking about false teachers and he calls them these dreamers.

They're full of just false ideas and delusions and they're so puffed up in their own minds that they imagine themselves unequal with angels and demons. So in the very same way these dreamers pollute their own bodies, they reject authority and they slander celestial beings.

But even the archangel Michael when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him but said the Lord rebuke you.

[36 : 08] Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand. So Michael doesn't dare to bring a slanderous accusation against the devil. They are enemies.

But even in that Michael respects in a certain way the devil. He gives them his due. And Jude later says these people are like animals. They don't have any sense if they think they can just slander celestial beings.

You'd have to be as dumb as an ox to not at least respect and take into account the hostile powers that are arrayed against us. But Christ alone is worthy of worship.

Paul says you think these angels are great and they are. They're the good ones and the bad ones but whether they are good or bad they were created by Christ and for Christ. And Christ alone has our worship and is due it.

Third, why do we need to understand this? Because understanding the glory and the majesty of Christ keeps us from tipping over into false doctrine. Understanding the majesty of Christ puts everything into perspective.

[37 : 15] It puts everything in the right balance. So it puts the weight in the boat where it needs to be. And so all this high-sounding philosophy and this high-sounding traditions, they pale in comparison to Jesus Christ.

And so when false doctrine comes, it's like waves crashing against the rocks. The rocks are unmoved. That's what this does, this truth does to us. It makes us solid.

Fourth, this truth makes us valiant in the face of odds that seem overwhelming. It makes us valiant, courageous in the face of things that seem overwhelmingly against us to the natural eye.

Again, read Revelation sometime and you'll see that there's always this juxtaposition of what the eye sees and what is really going on. So there's truth that makes us brave.

So who can conquer the beast? Here's the beast, here's the dragon, he's tearing down, he's killing the church, he's killing the martyrs. That seems to be what is true. Satan seems to be winning. And Revelation shows us.

[38 : 29] Well, it looks like Satan's winning. But then it shows us what's really going on. It shows the real status of things. So Christ is on the throne and the devil is in chains.

And the martyrs are not losing, they're winning and reigning with Jesus Christ. Christ is sovereign over all hostile powers. That gives us courage to suffer.

Yes, it looks like I'm suffering for nothing, but the truth makes me brave and gives me faith to suffer, to die, in the face of what seems to be so evident. The devil is winning, we are losing, but the truth says not at all.

Not at all. And then related to that is number five, and this is where we'll end. This truth should make us feel that our salvation in Jesus Christ is invincible.

It's invincible. He's disarmed the powers and authorities. He's made a public spectacle of them on the cross. Your salvation in Jesus Christ is invincible.

[39 : 32] No one can take it away. Christ has won, and now nothing can separate you from him. Well, we're dismissed. .